

– Estonia and the European Social Charter –

Signatures, ratifications and accepted provisions

Estonia ratified the Revised European Social Charter on 11/09/2000, accepting 79 of the Revised Charter's 98 paragraphs.

On 27 June 2012, Estonia accepted 8 additional provisions of the Charter, thus accepting to be bound by 87 of the Revised Charter's 98 paragraphs.

Estonia has not yet ratified the Additional Protocol providing for a system of collective complaints.

The Charter in domestic law

Under chapter 3 of the Constitution: "The powers of state shall be exercised solely pursuant to the Constitution and laws which are in conformity therewith. Generally recognised principles and rules of international law are an inseparable part of the Estonian legal system."

Table of accepted provisions

1.1	1.2	1.3	1.4	2.1	2.2	2.3	2.4	2.5	2.6	2.7	3.1
3.2	3.3	3.4	4.1	4.2	4.3	4.4	4.5	5	6.1	6.2	6.3
6.4	7.1	7.2	7.3	7.4	7.5	7.6	7.7	7.8	7.9	7.10	8.1
8.2	8.3	8.4	8.5	9	10.1	10.2	10.3	10.4	10.5	11.1	11.2
11.3	12.1	12.2	12.3	12.4	13.1	13.2	13.3	13.4	14.1	14.2	15.1
15.2	15.3	16	17.1	17.2	18.1	18.2	18.3	18.4	19.1	19.2	19.3
19.4	19.5	19.6	19.7	19.8	19.9	19.10	19.11	19.12	20	21	22
23	24	25	26.1	26.2	27.1	27.2	27.3	28	29	30	31.1
31.2	31.3										

Grey = Accepted provisions

Reports on non-accepted provisions

The European Committee of Social Rights ("the Committee") examines the situation of non-accepted provisions of the Revised Charter every 5 years after the ratification. It adopted [reports concerning Estonia](#) in 2005, 2010, 2015 and 2021.

The Committee is of the opinion that there are no legal obstacles for acceptance by Estonia of the following provisions: Articles 2§4, 3§4, 7§6, 10§5, 18§3, 23, 31§2 and 31§3.

Further information on the reports on non-accepted provisions is available on the [relevant webpage](#).

Monitoring the implementation of the European Social Charter ¹

I. Reporting system ²

Reports submitted by Estonia

Between 2003 and 2024, Estonia has submitted 21 reports on the application of the Revised Charter.

The [20th report](#), which was submitted on 27/02/2023, concerns the accepted provisions relating to thematic group 4 "Children, families and migrants" (Articles 7, 8, 16, 17, 16, 19, 27 and 31).

Conclusions with respect to these provisions have been published in March 2024.

On 8 January 2024, an [ad hoc report on the cost-of-living crisis was submitted by Estonia](#)³.

¹ The Committee monitors compliance with the Charter under two procedures, the reporting system and the collective complaints procedure, according to Rule 2 of the Committee's rules: « 1. The Committee rules on the conformity of the situation in States with the European Social Charter, the 1988 Additional Protocol and the Revised European Social Charter. 2. It adopts conclusions through the framework of the reporting procedure and decisions under the collective complaints procedure ».

Further information on the [procedures](#) may be found on the [HUDOC database](#) and in the [Digest of the case law of the Committee](#).

² Detailed information on the Reporting System is available on the [relevant webpage](#). The reports submitted by States Parties may be consulted in the [relevant section](#).

³ In accordance with the [decision of the Ministers' Deputies](#) adopted on 27 September 2022 concerning the [new system](#) for the presentation of reports under the European Social Charter, the European Committee of Social Rights and the Governmental Committee have decided to request an *ad hoc* report on the cost-of-living crisis to all State parties.

Situations of non-conformity ⁴

Thematic Group 1 "Employment, training and equal opportunities" - Conclusions 2020

► *Article 15§3 – Right of persons with disabilities to independence, social integration and participation in the life of the community – Integration and participation of persons with disabilities in the life of the community*
There was no legislation prohibiting discrimination against persons with disabilities specifically covering the areas of housing, transport, communications and culture and leisure activities during the reference period.

► *Article 20 – Right to equal opportunities and equal treatment in matters of employment and occupation without discrimination on the ground of sex*
Sufficient measurable progress in respect of the obligation to promote the right to equal pay has not been achieved.

Thematic Group 2 "Health, social security and social protection" - Conclusions 2021

► *Article 3§3 - Right to safe and healthy working conditions - Enforcement of safety and health regulations*
The labour inspection system concerning occupational health and safety, is ineffective.

► *Article 12§1 – Right to social security - Existence of a social security system*
- The minimum level of sickness benefit is inadequate;
- The minimum levels of unemployment allowance and unemployment insurance benefit are inadequate;
- The minimum level of contributory pension is inadequate.

► *Article 12§4 – Right to social security – Social security of persons moving between states*
The right to maintenance of accruing benefits is not guaranteed for nationals of all other States Parties.

► *Article 13§1 – Right to social and medical assistance – Adequate assistance for every person in need*
The level of social assistance paid to a single person without resources is not adequate.

► *Article 30 - Right to be protected against poverty and social exclusion*
There is no adequate overall and coordinated approach in place to combat poverty and social exclusion.

Thematic Group 3 "Labour rights" - Conclusions 2022

► *Article 2§1 – Right to just conditions of work – Reasonable working time*
Certain workers can be authorised to work for up to 24 hours.

► *Article 6§2 – Right to bargain collectively – Negotiation procedures*
The promotion of collective bargaining is not sufficient.

► *Article 6§4 - Right to bargain collectively - Collective action*
All public servants exercising authority in the name of the State are denied the right to strike.

Thematic Group 4 "Children, families, migrants" - Conclusions 2023

► *Article 7§1 – Right of children and young persons to protection – Prohibition of employment under the age of 15*

The duration of working time for children aged 7-14 is excessive and therefore cannot be regarded as light.

► *Article 7§3 – Right of children and young persons to protection – Prohibition of the employment of children subject to compulsory education*

The duration of working time for children still subject to compulsory school attendance is excessive and may deprive them of the full benefit of education.

► *Article 8§4 - Right of employed women to protection of maternity - Regulation of night work*

⁴ Further information on the situations of non-conformity is available on the [HUDOC database](#).

Pregnant women, women who have recently given birth or are nursing who cannot perform night work and cannot be offered suitable alternative employment and are obliged to take leave are not entitled to 100% of their previous salary.

► *Article 8§5 - Right of employed women to protection of maternity - Prohibition of dangerous, unhealthy or arduous work*

Pregnant women, women who have recently given birth or are nursing, whose ordinary employment has been deemed unsuitable due to their condition and who cannot be offered suitable alternative employment and are obliged to take leave are not entitled to 100% of their previous salary.

► *Article 16 – Right of the family to social, legal and economic protection*

- The notice period for evicting tenants is too short;
- Evictions may be carried out in winter and during the night.

► *Article 17§1 – Right of children and young persons to social, legal and economic protection – Assistance, education and training*

Bone testing is used to assess the age of children in irregular situation.

The Committee also considered that the failure to provide requested information on Articles 7§9, 7§10 and 17§1 amounts to a breach by Estonia of its reporting obligations under Article C of the Charter.

The Committee has been unable to assess compliance with the following provisions:

Thematic Group 1 "Employment, training and equal opportunities"

- ▶ Article 1§2 - Conclusions 2020
- ▶ Article 10§1 - Conclusions 2020
- ▶ Article 10§2 - Conclusions 2020
- ▶ Article 10§4 - Conclusions 2020
- ▶ Article 15§1 - Conclusions 2020

Thematic Group 2 "Health, social security and social protection"

- ▶ Article 11§1 - Conclusions 2021
- ▶ Article 11§3 - Conclusions 2021
- ▶ Article 14§2 - Conclusions 2021

Thematic Group 3 "Labour rights"

- ▶ Article 4§3 - Conclusions 2022
- ▶ Article 5 - Conclusions 2022

Thematic Group 4 "Children, families, migrants"

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II. Examples of progress achieved in the implementation of rights under the Charter (*non-exhaustive list*)

Thematic Group 1 "Employment, training and equal opportunities"

► The Equal Treatment Act which entered into force on 1 January 2009 provides for a prohibition of discrimination on the ground of disability in access to all types and to all levels of vocational guidance, vocational training, advanced vocational training and retraining as well in conditions of access to employment, self-employment, including selection criteria, recruitment conditions and promotion; working conditions, remuneration, and termination of employment.

► Amendments to the Defense Forces Service Act shortened alternative service from 12-18 months to 8-12 months as of July 2010.

► The Gender Equality Act (GEA) entered into force in 2004 and aims at ensuring equal treatment for men and women in all areas of public and private life.

► Amendment of the Criminal Code in order to criminalise trafficking in persons and enslavement.

Thematic Group 2 "Health, social security and social protection"

► The Health and Safety at Work Network inside Estonia was re-established in 2012. Its aim is the development of the field of occupational health and safety issues by providing a framework for institutions that enables the use of health and safety information, experience and knowledge in a more efficient way among the network members.

► An electronic tool "Töökik" has been developed in 2011-2015. It enables an enterprise to administer data related to its work environment, to conduct risk assessment and to maintain necessary data bases.

► On 1 January 2019 amendments to the Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Act came into force. One of the amendments to the Act is related to psychosocial hazards. The term "psychological hazards" was replaced with the term "psychosocial hazards". The definition of the term is specified in greater detail in the Act, as are the measures to be applied for preventing damage to health caused by psychosocial hazards.

► The Labour Inspectorate have been developing a new information system, which increases the efficiency of inspections, allows for automated supervision and saves time. The new system, operational since the first quarter of 2020 allows Labour Inspectorate to cover more companies and workers with the inspections and helps Labour Inspectorate to communicate with companies faster and more effectively.

Thematic Group 3 "Labour rights"

► Article 44 of the Employment Contracts Act (ECA) provides for a mixed system of compensation for overtime. Overtime may be compensated in two ways – with money or with time off. According to Article 44(6) of the ECA, employer must compensate for overtime by time off equal to the overtime, unless it has been agreed that overtime is compensated for in money. Article 44(7) of the ECA provides that if overtime is compensated in money, it has to be done at 1.5 rate. When time off is granted instead of monetary compensation, this time off cannot be deducted from standard rest periods and must be paid as working hours. Thus the employer has to pay the regular wage for overtime and give time off in the same amount as overtime worked.

► Amendments were introduced to the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) in 2019 to strengthen the protection of workers against psychosocial hazards, including harassment at work, and to specify employers' obligations to prevent such psychosocial risks. The Green Book on Mental Health was created in cooperation with the social partners. The Working Life Portal has a dedicated web page on mental health that provides useful information on psychosocial hazards for both employers and employees.

Thematic Group 4 “Children, families, migrants”

►Introduction of a family benefit which is intended to offset the cost of raising a child and to reconcile work and family life (*Parental Benefits Act of 1 January 2004*).

►The Child Protection Act of 2014 (in force between 23/12/2013 and 31/12/2015) provides in its Section 178 (Manufacture of works involving child pornography or making child pornography available) that manufacture, acquisition or storing, handing over, displaying or making available to another person in any other manner of pictures, writings or other works or reproductions of works depicting a person of less than 18 years of age in a pornographic situation, or a person of less than 14 years of age in a pornographic or erotic situation, is punishable by a pecuniary punishment or up to three years' imprisonment.

►Estonia abolished all forms of corporal punishment in all settings.

►In Estonia the amount of child allowance has been significantly raised compared to the previous reference period from € 19 (2013) to € 55 (2017). The Committee notes that the child allowances now represent 7% of the median equivalised income.